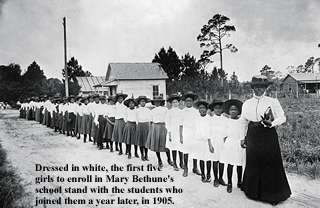
**A Thirst for Education**

*By Shawn Hoffelt*

Right from the start, Mary Jane McLeod knew the meaning of hard work and sweat.

She was born the fifteenth child to former slaves, near Mayesville, South Carolina, in 1875. It wasn’t long before she joined her family in the fields. She spent hours—her back bent in the hot sun—planting, weeding, and picking cotton. By age nine, Mary could pick 250 pounds of cotton a day. Her father considered her his champion picker.

Mary was strong, but she had other talents as well. She was known for her singing voice and, more importantly, for her sharp mind, deep thoughts, and thirst for education.

***Dressed in white, the first five girls to enroll in Mary Bethune’s school stand with the students who joined them a year later, in 1905.***

“My mother said when I was born I was different from the rest. For one thing, I was the most homely child. The ordinary things the children did, I wouldn’t. My sisters wanted to get married early. I had no inclinations that way. . . . My ideas were different. My mother was proud of it. My father felt the same way. . . . I was always striving to set up something that was going in the opposite direction from the mass of things. . . .”

Mary was destined to go on from the cotton fields. Years later, she recalled, “I knew then, as I stood in the cotton field helping with the farm work, that I was called to a task which I could not name or explain.”

She was eleven when the first Black mission school opened in Mayesville. Mary walked five miles each way to attend. She learned all she could there. But by age fifteen she was back on the farm, since there were no Black high schools for her to attend.

Mary would not be defeated. Her appetite for learning never diminished. She prayed for a chance to continue her education. News of the Mayesville mission school had spread, and soon a scholarship was donated to a promising student “who would make good.” Mary was chosen. She went off to Scotia Seminary in North Carolina and then on to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

During this time, Mary felt a call to be a missionary in Africa. But after finishing Chicago’s Moody Bible Institute, she was told that Black missionaries were not being sent to Africa from the United States.

In these early years, Mary taught wherever she was most needed. She married Albertus Bethune, a former schoolteacher, and had a son.

In the early 1900s, Mary was in charge of a school in Palatka, Florida. All along she kept dreaming of starting her own school for Black girls. In 1904, at the urging of a young Baptist minister, Mary moved to Daytona Beach in eastern Florida near the center of a railroad construction project.

With $1.50 she rented a cottage and started her school, the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls. Five girls and Mary’s son, Albert, enrolled.

The elementary school grew by faith and hard work. Each day Mary and her students searched the city dump and trash piles behind hotels, picking up cracked dishes, broken chairs, lumber, and other discarded items that could be cleaned and repaired for use in their school.

“We burned logs and used the charred splinters as pencils,” she said. “For ink we mashed up elderberries.”

Enrollment increased. Classes began to overrun the cottage. Mary Bethune searched for property of her own. The only available spot was the city dump. The price, $250. The owner agreed to accept $5 down with the balance to be paid later.

“He never knew it, Mary later recalled, “but at the time I didn’t even have the first $5.” With the help of students and supporters, she got the money by selling ice cream and sweet-potato pies to nearby construction workers. The dump was cleared, and the fund-raising continued.

Mary and her students sang at fashionable hotels. She gave speeches and campaigned for support. All along, her deep faith and prayer gave her hope that the amount of financial gifts would grow.

And they did. Gradually, as the contributions increased, school enrollment thrived. From the humble cottage elementary school and the city dump, the institute grew into a secondary school and later merged with Cookman Institute, the first Florida school for the education of Black boys. Today Mary Bethune’s dream has become the modern campus of Bethune-Cookman College.

As her school prospered, Mary Bethune’s influence reached far beyond Florida. In 1935, she organized the National Council of Negro Women to fight against segregation and discrimination. The following year the President himself, Franklin D. Roosevelt, appointed her director of the Negro Affairs Division of the National Youth Administration.

Mary Bethune was a teacher, organizer, administrator, and clever politician, who saw education as a way of getting on in the world, escaping poverty, and gaining self-respect. Until her death in 1955, she campaigned tirelessly for social justice.

1. The reader can conclude that Mary received a scholarship to continue her education because she
2. could pick more cotton in one day than other girls.
3. promised to teach in Africa when she finished school.
4. she demonstrated characteristics of a promising student.
5. was the only child in her community interested in learning.
6. When Mary was younger, why did she most likely work in the cotton fields?
7. She needed to help her family.
8. She enjoyed working outdoors.
9. She tried to make her parents proud.
10. She wanted to improve her singing voice.
11. Why did Mary have to wait until she was eleven years old to attend school?
12. Her family needed her to keep picking cotton.
13. She had to wait for a black school to open in her town.
14. She wanted to get married before she began her education.
15. Her parents would not allow her to go to school until she was older.
16. The reader can conclude that Mary and her students sang at hotels to
17. increase attendance at their school.
18. raise money to improve their school.
19. prove they were ready to travel to Africa.
20. convince guests they were great musicians.
21. The reader can conclude that Mary’s schools were successful because
22. children would rather go to school than work in a field.
23. her passion and dedication to learning inspired children.
24. the President encouraged children to attend her schools.
25. she had many supporters donate large amounts of money.
26. Which detail from the passage helps show that Mary’s work reached all over the United States?
27. Mary merged her school with Cookman Institute.
28. Mary grew up in Mayesville, South Carolina and later moved to Palatka, Florida.
29. Mary was director of the Negro Affairs Division of the National Youth Administration.
30. Mary attended Scotia Seminary in North Carolina and then Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.
31. Read these sentences from the passage.

**Mary would not be defeated. Her appetite for learning never diminished.**

Which word has almost the SAME meaning as the word *diminished* as used in the sentence above?

1. decreased
2. increased
3. improved
4. lasted
5. Which sentence from the passage best describes the author’s viewpoint of Mary Bethune?
6. All along she kept dreaming of starting her own school for Black girls.
7. She was born the fifteenth child to former slaves, near Mayesville, South Carolina, in 1875.
8. All along, her deep faith and prayer gave her hope that the amount of financial gifts would grow.
9. Mary was a teacher, organizer, administrator, and clever politician, who saw education as a way of getting on in the world.
10. The author includes the photograph of Mary and students from 1905 to
11. prove that the school was really located at the city dump.
12. imply that the students who attended the school were poor.
13. provide an example of what students wore to school in the 1900s.
14. show how much the school enrollment had grown in only one year.
15. When Mary ran out of space to teach in her cottage, she solved her problem by
16. buying property at the city dump.
17. holding classes outside in the road.
18. moving her school to a nearby hotel.
19. combining her school with Cookman Institute.

Answer Key:

1. Correct Answer is C, DOK 2
2. Correct Answer is A, DOK 3
3. Correct Answer is B, DOK 3
4. Correct Answer is B, DOK 2
5. Correct Answer is B, DOK 2
6. Correct Answer is C, DOK 3
7. Correct Answer is A, DOK 1
8. Correct Answer is D, DOK 2
9. Correct Answer is D, DOK 2
10. Correct Answer is A, DOK 1